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SUBJECT: PM ERDOGAN TELLS CODEL BIDEN TURKEY CAN DO MORE IN AFGHANISTAN

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4(b),(d)

11. (C) Summary. Turkish PM Erdogan briefed visiting Senators Biden, Kerry and Hagel February 22 on GOT efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq, the fight against terrorism and Turkey's relations with Armenia. Noting the senators' previous stop in Afghanistan, Erdogan said Turkey can do more in Afghanistan; he discussed additional actions Turkey can take at a February 21 meeting with senior officials, and plans to consult with military officials on the way forward. Erdogan said projects to address the public's needs in both Iraq and Afghanistan are the key to breaking the terrorists' influence and should be emphasized. Senator Kerry urged the GOT to keep the Iraqi government informed of Turkish military operations in northern Iraq. Erdogan told the delegation he and President Gul talked with PM Maliki and President Talabani February 21; he expects Talabani will visit Turkey soon. Erdogan said a majority of Iraqis want a unified democratic country and urged continued efforts to bring them together. End summary.

AFGHANISTAN/NATO

12. (C) PM Erdogan acknowledged that Turkey's contributions to NATO efforts in Afghanistan -- 750 troops, the Wardak PRT, ISAF command twice and Central Command now -- are not enough; Turkey could do more. He discussed additional actions with senior officials yesterday, he said, and would consult with Turkish military commanders next. To be more effective, NATO needs to emphasize PRT efforts and engage in more direct contact with Afghans, Erdogan remarked. By building schools, clinics, wells, roads, Turkey's PRT has had a positive impact that has weakened the Taliban's influence. "We have been going through this ourselves" in Turkey, he said, and have achieved some success with this approach.

TERRORISM FIGHT

13. (C) Senator Kerry said the USG has long shared Turkey's view of the PKK as a terrorist organization. While the reasons behind Turkey's decision to launch a land operation into northern Iraq, announced that morning, were understandable, Kerry urged Erdogan to keep the Iraqi government in the loop. "We don't want this to become counter-productive to our efforts in the region," he stressed. Erdogan emphasized the importance of Turkish-American solidarity in the face of such regional

challenges. President Bush's November 5 statement that the terrorist PKK is an enemy of the US, Turkey and Iraq was a clear sign of US solidarity in the fight against terrorism, as is increased bilateral intelligence sharing on PKK activities.

IRAQ

14. (C) Erdogan referred to contacts he and president Gul had with their Iraqi counterparts the day before. Turkey hopes Talabani will visit soon. Erdogan offered Turkey's assistance in training Iraq's police force and army to help them beat back terrorists. Erdogan noted Kirkuk's status is the most sensitive issue in Iraq for Turkey, stressing the city belongs to all Iraqis. He agreed with Senator Biden that a broad political solution in Iraq is needed, and maintained a majority of Iraqis want unity. Turkey worked hard to bring Iraq's Sunnis into the government, pressing them to participate in Iraq's elections. Some Shia want unity too, he said; it may not be evident everywhere but the majority of Iraqis want a unified democratic Iraq. "We have to keep working on bringing them together," Erdogan emphasized, and it will take more than military action. The money pouring into Iraq must be spent efficiently on clinics, roads, education and infrastructure to win public support.

15. (C) Senator Biden told Erdogan the unity of Iraq rests in its decentralization; insisting on a centralized government will lead to Iraq's partition. Biden doubted PM Maliki would be able to form a unified government and predicted US policy under a new US administration would not rest on a central Iraqi government backed by US forces. Senator Kerry added that changes in US policy will be a transformation, not an

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abandonment, of US responsibilities in Iraq. Erdogan stressed it would be unsound to allow piece-meal declarations of separate governments that are then forged into some kind of federation.

ARMENIA

16. (C) Raising the House resolution on Armenian "genocide", Erdogan urged the senators not to let the 1915 massacre of Armenians by Ottomans interfere with strategic US-Turkey relations. He reviewed Turkey's proposal to Armenian President Kocharian for both countries to open their archives and Turkey's offer to establish a joint experts committee to evaluate the historical record. While Turkey has opened its archive, Armenia has not, he said, adding the GOT established an air cargo link with Armenia and allows 40,000 Armenians to work illegally in Turkey because of Armenia's dire economic situation. Senator Kerry agreed the issue must not impinge on other bilateral objectives and offered to help put the issue on a more constructive track.

17. (U) The Codel was not able to clear this cable.

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